

will be deeply missed by all who knew them. I extend my deepest sympathies to both men's families, colleagues, and friends.

WESTON PLAYHOUSE THEATRE COMPANY

Mr. LEAHY. Mr. President, it is a delight to call the Senate's attention to the record of 75 years of quality productions achieved by the Weston Playhouse Theatre Company as they celebrate this major milestone with their community and friends. Among its many accolades—including the Moss Hart Award for Best Production in New England for "Floyd Collins"—Weston's Playhouse has earned a national reputation as a professional theatre. As Vermont's oldest theater, and one of the 15 oldest theatre companies across the United States, the Weston Playhouse has entertained families and visitors from New England and beyond since its founding in 1935. Its first professional season in 1937 included the opening of Noel Coward's "Hay Fever," featuring young actor Lloyd Bridges. Since then the Weston Playhouse has grown to include musicals and late-night entertainment, cradled in Weston's small village of 640 people.

Consistent with Vermonters' willful determination and hard work, Weston's Playhouse Theatre Company endured a 1962 fire that destroyed the original playhouse building. Despite this hardship, the community pulled their resources together and continued to provide Vermonters and New England with quality theatre and musical experiences. Today the company serves 25,000 Vermonters and Vermont visitors each year with its devoted staff, talented artists, and dedicated board. The Weston Playhouse Theatre Company has routinely met their goals of making live theatre accessible and meaningful to a broad population of Vermonters. Resource support through the National Endowment for the Arts has allowed the playhouse to expand its offerings of cultural experiences to thousands of elementary, middle and high school aged children every year. Their outreach programs have promoted educational productions and have toured often throughout Vermont and New England while continuing to produce prestigious regional and world premieres.

Marcelle and I have always enjoyed attending theatre productions in Vermont, and we have wonderful memories of the time we have spent with the Weston Playhouse Theatre Company, as well as of the wonderful people we have met at the theatre. It is important to our State that we continue to host diverse actors and actresses on Vermont's stages, enriching the lives of Vermonters across the State. Anyone who has contemplated a painting in a museum, examined an original manuscript or composition, or disappeared into a performance as the lights dimmed—and has gained a greater understanding of both the artist and

the subject as a result—knows the power and importance of these works in our lives. I am proud to join in honoring the Weston Playhouse Theatre Company for 75 wonderful years of achievements that have enriched our heritage and the quality of life in the marvelous Green Mountain State.

ADDITIONAL STATEMENTS

REMEMBERING BEN GRUSSENDORF

• Mr. BEGICH. Mr. President, today I wish to memorialize a great Alaskan, Mr. Ben Grussendorf. A public servant, master teacher, community activist, legislator, outdoorsman, and all-around gentleman, Ben Grussendorf died June 17, 2011. He is survived by his wife of 48 years, Karen, son Tim, daughter Karla, and four grandchildren.

Born February 23, 1942, in Grand Rapids, MN, Ben attended the University of Minnesota, where he earned a B.A. in political science and an M.A. in political science education.

In 1967, eager to fish, hunt, and hike, Ben and Karen moved to Sitka, AK, to teach. Ben taught government and social sciences at Sitka High School and Sitka Community College, but his attraction to politics and government soon drew him to help shape a strong future for his adopted community. Ben was elected to the Charter Commission, and became its chair, leading the effort to write unification documents which continue to govern the city and borough of Sitka. He was subsequently elected for two terms to serve as mayor of this unified government. In 1980, Sitka voters sent him to the State House of Representatives where he served 10 terms, a full 20 years.

In the legislature, Ben earned a reputation as a diplomat. He was a man who focused on problems and solutions rather than party and politics. The respect he showed by listening to differing viewpoints opened the door for people of all backgrounds and political persuasions to create a climate of compromise. Ben knew true leadership was born, not in brazen ideas or self-promotion, but in the ability to win allies and build coalitions. Because of his ability to nurture friendships on both sides of the aisle, he was elected as Speaker of the House for an unprecedented three terms.

As speaker, Ben brokered compromises which put the public first. Fair to everyone, his calm composure and down-home sense of humor defused tension and brought people together; his vision and diplomacy kept them focused on the greater good.

Throughout his tenure in the House, Ben was renowned for his patience, discretion, and expertise. He knew the nooks and crannies both of the legislative process and the issues. Colleagues relied on him for inside knowledge of Alaskan politics to affect change and

make a difference. They remember him as an important teacher and mentor, one who led by example.

When Ben announced his retirement from the Legislature in 2000, he cited his original Alaska draw—time to hunt, fish, and walk his dogs. Because of his passion for wildlife and capitalizing on his legislative expertise, Governor Tony Knowles convinced him to accept appointment to the Alaska Board of Game in 2001. There, he put his listening and diplomatic skills to further use, tackling important challenges such as caribou herd management and subsistence policy. His effectiveness and diplomacy earned him successive reappointments by Governors Murkowski, Palin, and Parnell.

Whether hunting, fishing, hiking, gardening, or just observing, Ben was an outdoorsman at heart. He was also a writer who kept a journal, wrote short stories and drafted manuscripts about subjects he well understood—politics and nature.

Ben Grussendorf's devotion to Sitka and to Alaska, whether as a teacher, a legislator, a member of the Board of Game, or a member of community service organizations, was inspirational. He made a difference with every commitment, and his years of working on issues important to people throughout the State will be part of his legacy as an Alaska statesman. He will be deeply missed by his family and his many friends.●

DEVILS POSTPILE NATIONAL MONUMENT

• Mrs. BOXER. Mr. President, I ask my colleagues to join me in celebrating the centennial of Devils Postpile National Monument in the Eastern Sierra of California.

When Devils Postpile was first surveyed in the early 20th century, it became apparent to geologists that its distinctive formation and features of the surrounding landscape provided a special window into the volcanic and glacial processes that shaped the Sierra Nevada as a whole.

The cliff of columnar basalt that constitutes the Devils Postpile, so named because it looks like tall posts piled together, is one of the wonders of the geological world. The columns can reach heights towering more than 60 feet. Those on the west front are high, straight and clean-cut; those at its southern end stand out for their curvature.

Shortly after the initial survey, U.S. Forest Service Engineer Walter Huber learned of a plan to blast portions of the Devils Postpile to create a dam that would flood the middle fork of the San Joaquin River and provide power to nearby mining operations. Mr. Huber considered the idea as a "wanton destruction of scenery" and began the effort to establish a monument to protect Devils Postpile along with the nearby Rainbow Falls, a spectacular